

## **Gaps in the Early Care and Education Professional Development System Infrastructure**

### **Qualifications and Credentials:**

*A Decade of Data: The Compensation and Credentials of Arizona's Early Care and Education Workforce* (2008) revealed that educational requirements by employers of early care and education teachers are actually decreasing. The report speculates that the lessening of teacher qualification requirements by employers is a result of the challenge providers have in recruiting and retaining staff with higher educational attainment. This challenge could certainly be a result of low wages.

The higher costs associated with operating a business present another challenge. For example, increasing gasoline prices and the cost of maintenance to vehicles used to transport children, higher utilities and facility maintenance costs, and food prices, coupled with a state child care subsidy which has not increased above the 2000 market rate, clearly impacts a program's ability to pay higher wages and to recruit more highly educated staff. Individuals with higher educational attainment typically seek positions where wages reflect their knowledge and experience.

Among programs that require the minimum education as established by child care licensing, poor salaries attract workers who have lower educational attainment relative to other professional pathways. Positions in settings such as Kindergarten or Head Start are typically held by individuals with higher educational attainment, who also receive higher compensation. Significant variations exist across types of early care and education employers. Head Start programs are reported as paying the highest salaries for teachers with a median of \$15.00 per hour. In contrast, for-profit early care and education employers tend to pay the lowest salaries with a median of \$8.50 per hour.

### **Limited Resources for Compensation:**

As described in the Statewide Needs and Assets Report, *Building Bright Futures* (2007), limited resources are available to assist with wage increases. Financial barriers to providing for improved wages include: lower than market rate DES subsidies, few incentives to hire and retain highly qualified staff, and communities where child care costs are at the limit of what the market can bear. Program providers cannot pay their staff more without raising costs to families which decreases affordability, and consequently, availability of care.